



# United States Department of the Interior

## FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Mountain-Prairie Region



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**MAR 04 2005**

### Memorandum

To: All Employees, Mountain-Prairie Region

From: Regional Director, Mountain-Prairie Region *Ralph D. Mergemede*

Subject: Equal Employment Opportunity Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy Statement

This memorandum emphasizes my personal commitment to achieve equal employment opportunity (EEO) for every employee of the Mountain-Prairie Region and a work force that is reflective of the diversity of the Nation's population. As the Regional Director, I am committed to ensure that every employee is provided a work environment free from discrimination and harassment on all protected bases including, but not limited to, race, color, religion, age, sex (gender and sexual harassment), national origin, physical or mental disability, reprisal, and sexual orientation.

I am dedicated to achieving excellence in EEO in the Region and ensuring that employment decisions and personnel actions are administered fairly, equitably, and in compliance with the Federal regulations governing EEO and personnel management.

Individuals will not be denied opportunities in employment because of their race, sex, age, religion, color, national origin, physical or mental disability, reprisal, sexual orientation, or any other factors not properly relevant to employment.

It is the responsibility of managers, supervisors, and employees to support the EEO program principles; create a positive environment for a multicultural work force; maintain a workplace free from discrimination and harassment in practices and policies; and attempt resolution of any form of discrimination and harassment.

Discrimination is defined as disparate treatment of an adverse nature towards an employee, applicant for employment, or beneficiary based on race, color, religion, age, sex, national origin, physical or mental disability, reprisal, sexual orientation, or sexual harassment.

Harassment is defined as abusive words or phrases; slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; put-down jokes; written or graphic material that shows hostility or

aversion to an individual or group. Sexual harassment is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature that results in discrimination and/or a hostile work environment. Sexual harassment involves influencing, offering to influence, or threatening the career, pay, or job of an individual in exchange for sexual favors.

All employees play a participatory role in supporting this effort through their individual conduct and, therefore, must be sensitive to the rights of co-workers and all others with whom they interact.

All managers and supervisors must be alert to issues which might result in allegations of discrimination and harassment. When discrimination or harassment is alleged, it is our policy to attempt to resolve the matter in a prompt and equitable manner. If conflicts arise, employees and managers must work together to resolve issues at early stages and seek assistance from an EEO Counselor in resolving concerns. Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) may also be used to resolve complaints. All complainants are guaranteed freedom from reprisal. Failure to comply with EEO laws and regulations may lead to disciplinary action, up to and including removal from the Service.

I expect managers and supervisors to respond to complaints swiftly and appropriately, as they will be held accountable for taking steps to eliminate such behavior, and to ensure that the work environment is one where employees are treated fairly, respectfully and with human dignity. It is everyone's responsibility to perform official duties in a manner that maintains and fosters a non-hostile work environment in the work place, while on official travel, and at sanctioned social functions. Discrimination and harassment has no place in the Region and I expect all employees to abide by this policy.

Any person who believes (s)he has been discriminated against should contact an EEO Counselor within 45 calendar days of the alleged incident before filing a formal complaint. Employees who believe there may be discrimination against them are encouraged to communicate their concerns to the offending party and/or their supervisor in attempts to resolve the situation creating concern. If this is not possible or the situation does not improve, they should contact the Office of Diversity and Civil Rights and speak to an EEO Counselor. For detailed information on the EEO complaint process, please visit the website at <http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/dcr/>.

The most valuable asset of our Region is our people. A successful Region is a cohesive one where all employees have mutual respect for each other's diversity and dignity. I expect your assistance in making the Mountain-Prairie Region the best place to work by supporting our EEO initiatives in the workplace.